



THE FINAL PHASE OF
THE EXTINCT TASMANIAN RACE 1847-1876

by

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INTRODUCTION

As much of the narrative that follows relates to the writer and his family, the use of the first person will be found, perhaps too frequently.

My familiarity of Oyster Cove dates from about 1890 when, as a small boy, our school holidays were spent there. Little more than half a mile away from our cottage, were the dilapidated remains of the Reserve buildings to which, in 1847, the last 45 of the Tasmanian natives had been removed from Flinders Island.

Here, in the remains of what had been the Superintendent's quarters, lived a Mr. Palmer who supplied us with our daily milk and in the early morning it was often my chore to run bare footed along the track to collect it. We children were great friends with the older settlers, many of whom had first and second hand knowledge of "the blacks" and their habits, notably Mrs. Benbow whose father who had been sergeant in charge of a detail of a British regiment stationed in the Bay. She had close contact with the aborigines as a little girl and used to draw charcoal drawings of them on her white hearthstone to illustrate her stories.

My father (E. L. Crowther, M.D.) had one encounter when, as a schoolboy (circa 1855) on the paddle steamer "Cobra" proceeding to his father's saw mills at the next bay and asleep on the deck, he was awakened and told to look over the side of the steamer. There he saw a whaleboat manned by a male native at the steer oar and a woman at each of the other five oars. He remembered them as very ugly, rather like monkeys with their clay pipes in their mouths.

My grandfather (W. L. Crowther, F.R.C.S.Eng.) also had encountered them on two occasions when, as a schoolboy, he and a companion made the long 120 miles walk between Hobart Town and Mr. Claibourne's school at Norfolk Plains (now Longford). On both these occasions by rare good fortune they arrived at their destination unharmed.

Lastly, on the sad and tragic occasion of the death of the last male Tasmanian and the mutilation of his body, the political and personal detractors of my grandfather accused him of having taken these parts as specimens for the Royal College of Surgeons Museum, London.

This was not proved and, on a subsequent hotly contested re-election to the Legislature fought on this issue, my grandfather won by a large majority.

Early in 1933 Dr. (later Sir) Colin MacKenzie, then Director of the Institute of Anatomy at Canberra, informed me of my selection to deliver the sixth Halford Oration later that year at Canberra, and invited me to accept this honour. The Oration itself had been founded by members of the Halford family to commemorate the services to medical literature and science of George Britten Halford, their forebear, who, in 1862 had been appointed to the infant Medical School at the University of Melbourne as Professor of Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology.

In his communication Sir Colin commented favourably on my interest in the Tasmanian aboriginals and of recent studies on their culture and habits, communicated by myself to the "Papers and Proceedings" of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

After reading the names and the academic distinction of my five predecessors in this role, although increasingly aware of my own limitations, I felt that in view of these special interests I should be justified in accepting his invitation. In accepting, and expressing my appreciation of the honour of my selection, I suggested that the title for the address would be

"1803 - 1876"

"The Passing of the Extinct
Tasmanian Race"

So, early in November 1933 I went to Melbourne to complete my paper and thence to Canberra. There on the 22nd of that month at the Institute of Anatomy, I carried out my mission. The occasion was of course a very memorable one to myself, marred only by the pain in a tooth socket from an extraction 2 days previously. There was a large audience and the usual kind expressions of appreciation were offered.

For myself, I may say frankly that I thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. At the time, however, I was far from satisfied with the small amount of information given as to the final phase of this national tragedy, passed at the aboriginal reserve at Oyster Cove.

Recently Mrs. Mary McRae of the State Library of Tasmania, when arranging material in relation to the probation phase of the convict system in V.D.L. circa 1840, located at the State Archives the official visitors book used at that station when, after years of disuse, it was repurchased by the Government to house the survivors of the Tasmanian aborigines. Reading through this volume 619/1 *q.v.* one found that the special entries by visiting magistrates and especially those of Dr. Wm. Smith M.R.C.S. (the medical

Officer responsible for the natives) added much information on this forgotten period (1847-1869) during which the survivors from Flinders Island gradually died from epidemics and other diseases aggravated by strong spirits and depression. This medical information, therefore, I have attempted to present as an "Epilogue to the Sixth Halford Oration" about 40 years after that event.

OYSTER COVE RESERVE AND ELSEWHERE

December, 1847 - 6th July, 1855.

Strangely little detailed official information remains in the State Archives relating to the last phase of the survivors of the race after their return to Van Diemens Land from the Flinders Island Reserve. The most intimate and revealing descriptions are to be found in the writings of James Bonwick and J. E. Calder, both prominent members of the community and familiar with G. W. Walker and James Backhouse whose writings also had done much to record the actual relationships between the blacks and the settlers. All four had been acquainted at first hand with the establishments at Flinders Island and Oyster Cove and a study of their writings is essential to an understanding of the events of the following two decades, which witnessed the extinction of the race in 1876.

We should expect much information from Dr. J. Milligan, who was for a brief period Superintendent at Flinders Island (appointed on 5th December 1843) and who brought his charges, 14 adult male natives, 22 adult females with 3 boys and 5 girls, to the Oyster Cove Reserve by the schooner "Sisters" in October, 1847. There previously had been friction at Flinders Island between Dr. Jeanneret M.D. and the officer in charge of the military guard detailed at that station and it is possible Dr. Milligan did not welcome this appointment as he had returned to Hobart Town in 1846 only to be reappointed in May, 1847.

Dr. Milligan had come to V.D.L. in February, 1831 as Medical Officer to the Van Diemens Land Company at Circular Head. He became Superintendent, stock keeper and Surgeon at Surrey Hills, later the new headquarters of the company. His work was excellent and affairs were flourishing when he learned that a Mr. John Chambers had been appointed to his position on 10th February, 1842. Dr. Milligan was very favourably known to Sir John Franklin, the Governor of Van Diemens Land, who promptly selected him as Inspector of convict discipline on 15th December, 1843 and later to be Superintendent and Medical Officer of the aborigines and Commandant of Flinders Island.

Earlier in the year Dr. Milligan had married Miss Eliza Lawrence of Launceston, who went with him to his new post where she died between 4th February 1844 and 14th March, 1846. Her tombstone may still be seen there but the cause of death is not stated.

Milligan had a scientific mind and interests and was closely associated with the newly formed "Tasmanian Society for Natural Science." He made notable discoveries in regard to coal deposits in V.D.L. and, as its Secretary, took much interest in the affairs of the newly formed Society. However, one feels that, having suffered the loss of his young wife at Flinders Island, he may have become tired of the aborigines and their problems and did not desire to preside over the sick and ailing remnants of the race. He did, however, make some efforts on their behalf in his reports to the Colonial Secretary such as CSO 24/271/5453 and CSO 24/284/6314. The former No. 5453 is dated 3rd December,

1850 with additions on 20.3.1851 etc *q.v.*

In this memorandum Dr. Milligan writes at length to the Colonial Secretary following the death recently of four of his charges as under:

3.12.1850 Detailed information as to the death of "Catherine" long bedridden and in a very feeble state. He adds "everyone else in the establishment in a state of perfect health."

On 3.2.1850 "Martha" her daughter, transferred from New Town to nurse "Catherine" and died after a severe illness of many months with "continued fever"; possibly pleurisy or pulmonary tubercular infection.

15.2.1851 "Wilhemena" alias "Wild Mary" died of an "inflammation of the bowel" of 3 days duration.

He had also to report the death of the aboriginal man "Neptune" after an illness of little more than three months. The onset of his illness was in the form of a "violent pleurisy," which, though it yielded to treatment, left a debility so great that he died on Friday 21st March. The last of these five deaths was that of "Edmund" on 26.3.52, also at Oyster Cove, from disease of the heart after an illness "by no means alarming as far as indicated by symptoms, of one days duration." Dr. Milligan comments, "for the last 12 months his [Edmunds] health had been uncertain and on the whole in a declining state." He then passes on to mention the question of the suitability of "The Reserve" from a health standpoint (CSO 24/271 No. 5453). He writes of "Neptune's" illness. On Monday last he had visited the Reserve with Dr. Lillie (The Presbyterian Divine) and had then conversed with the deceased, whom he had found seated among others in the yard or square in which the aborigines usually play ball; inferring that he was then in reasonable health. Dr. Milligan concludes, 23/9/1852, "This [Neptune] is one of those individuals mentioned by me in a recent personal interview with His Excellency, as likely to sink in the course of the winter."

He sums up the problem in these words, "The situation of the Establishment at Oyster Cove is both humid and cold and I conceive detrimental to the health of persons residing there, and in the case of the aborigines with a mistaken [*sic*] attention from neighbours, which renders it rather undesirable as a permanent residence for them. Adding, "I learn from some of them [the natives], they would not, with the tastes and habits they have lately formed, again willingly submit to be returned to an isolated position, even though it ensures for them a climate both warmer, drier and more favourable to this locality," he concludes "I may observe here, I never had more than one conversation on this, with the late Colonial Secretary." One may be very sure that, apart from the feelings of Dr. Milligan facing the task of ensuring the survival of the race with "all the cards" stacked against him, and His Excellency most anxious to be able to announce the success of his administration, there would loom in the background the humanitarian Colonial Office in London, most certainly anxious to have news from Hobart Town to justify their sanction to close down the Flinders Island Establishment and solve all their problems by returning the natives to their homeland.

The year 1849 opened well for the natives when Sir William and Lady Denison visited the Reserve. In early January they found all the natives complaining of cold though then in mid summer, sitting in their very close warm rooms, wrapped in their dirtiest blankets. Two of the women demonstrated climbing a large gum tree to 100 feet to take a parrot's nest. This performance amazed the Vice Regal party. Sir William writes "I give them ample rations, and they are well content to stay at home and eat, instead of roaming in the bush at the risk of being starved or shot."

Dated 31st July 1851, three months after its predecessor CSO 24/2711, we have another long memorandum (CSO 24/224/6314) from Dr. Milligan to the Colonial Secretary for transmission to the Governor. In this communication he reports officially on his return "from a Geological examination of the country about the Mersey and Don Rivers"; to the effect that, during April and May of this year, the aboriginal Establishment was visited by Dr. Rae of Browns River" in consequence of this many cases of serious illness which occurred and in the course of which 4 deaths took place. Since then several dangerous cases of pleurisy have occurred, and one man, no name attached attacked with peritoneal inflammation, died on June 24th, having been for some time bedridden from reiterated injuries to his foot after the reduction of a luxation which, but for these accidents, he would have recovered from."

The Superintendent goes on "I postponed this report until it would appear that the mortality upon the Establishment had abated." It continues "The unusual amount of disease, and the fatal termination which has in many instances followed of late, have been, by many, attributed to the extreme humidity of the ground on which the Establishment stands; but allowing that the site is both cold and humid as compared to many situations in V.D.L. it is to be borne in mind that the mortalities have occurred during the height of summer, and in a season memorable for great drought, and probably a good deal warmer than that of either of the two years immediately preceding it. It is also to be recollected that the aborigines are under no obligation to go out of doors in rainy or bad weather, the only toil expected of them is the procurement of their own firewood, and I have always been of the opinion that this form of regular labour (for upon the performance of it depends their indoor comfort) is rather more beneficial than otherwise. Without it they yield entirely to the natural indolence and love of ease, characteristic of the aboriginal races of these islands - neglect all exercise in the free open air, and moping [*sic*] themselves up in close, overheated apartments, render themselves like "hot house" plants, obnoxious to the breeze which secures health and vigour to those whose avocations expose their systems to its influence." The aborigines, indeed, were well fed and clothed but their huts were ramshackle and draughty and their meals consisted of meat and flour boiled down and eaten out of iron cauldrons. They had no labour imposed on them.

Milligan's report continues: "Their gardens are by no means so well kept as formerly, (another indication of the growth of indolent habits). The fact is, that their wants are supplied, and they have scarcely any inducement to bodily exertion. *A hunting expedition extending for 2-3 months, over some of the unoccupied country to the westward or to the islands of the straits or both, would probably do more to re-establish their health than almost any other plan that could be devised. Besides there existed bad influences and circumstances in their neighbourhood, from which they would be removed. These undesirable conditions are a system of traffic carried on with considerable subtlety on both sides, between them and the petty settlers, around which the latter habitually dispenses [*sic*] intoxicating and deleterious liquor to them in excess, to the great injury to their health. To this cause it is that I attribute chiefly both their proneness to disease of late, and the excessive mortality that has marked the course of the maladies, which have been developed in these conditions, which naturally very susceptible, are now jaded and inebled by irregular habits."*

Dr. Milligan concludes this important summary (CSO 24/284/6314) in these words "I am glad to report that there has been no death in the Establishment during this year, etc. etc."

This despatch of Dr. Milligan's submitted to the Governor on 8th May 1851, carried the short comment of His Excellency "*I should have no objection to allow of such an excursion as suggested by Dr. Milligan, but this is hardly the season for this, they might perhaps be made available in assisting the surveying parties.*"

1847-1852 Christmas at New Norfolk - His Excellency's Party

Having read a reference to the interest of the Governor in the survivors of the Tasmanians, I consulted "Varieties of Vice-Regal Life", letters home from Sir William Denison to his mother, wherein was the information sought.

At Christmas 1847, Sir William was in residence at the Vice-Regal Lodge at New Norfolk, His Excellency had noted that certain of the blacks had gone from the Reserve to Hobart Town to inspect the Queens Orphanage at New Town prior to sending their children there.

It was decided that the blacks should be invited to a party at New Norfolk, together with local officials and personal friends from the district and Sir William arranged for two carriages to drive the natives from Hobart Town to New Norfolk. On December 20th the guests were assembled, evidently for an outdoor reception with side shows and games.

Sir William continues, the party was assembled as they [the blacks] came in, "...fourteen of them, packed in two carriages, sitting on one another's knees, [or on the floor]... not caring how, in the intense delight and novelty of the visit. [*sic* They were greeted, and soon seated in the tent. We, including the children [the Denisons] walked up to them. 'Coached' before arrival]... they handled their knives and forks very cleverly, on the whole, and their appetites...appeared almost boundless. [After demolishing] immense quantities of beef and plum pudding, we gave them pipes and tobacco, for which both women and men have a great relish...the children, who did not smoke, were [given] an abundance of fruit and lollypops.....

[All the while, visitors, invited and uninvited, came to see the blacks, who were quite quiet and orderly. Afterwards shawls and coloured worsted comfitters were given to the men and boys.].....

[The names of the [natives] on this occasion were, Walter, Eugene, Normy [*sic*] and Neptune, the 3 boys, Billy, Adam and Moriarty.].....

[The ladies were] Marianne (the Chieftainess)... an immense, stout, masculine-looking woman,... old Sarah, Marianne's mother, Nancy, Martha,... and two girls, Hannah and Mathinna. [They spoke [*sic* with a correct] sort of broken English....[Dr. Milligan accompanied them to the party, which they left about 6 p.m.] in the same order they had come. We shook hands all round, and promised to pay them a visit...at Oyster Cove, and they drove off, having, I really [think] thoroughly enjoyed themselves."

There is yet another glimpse from the same source, later in the year, when Lady Denison visited the Queens Orphanage to see how their children were getting on. She went first to the girls side of the building. "[They came out]... grinning showing their ...teeth, and looking very pleased to see us again."

They first did a native dance to their own song. Lady Denison notes [each child has a different language] viz. ["total dialect"] which did not seem to have a single root in common with that of the[others]..., and the younger part of [the] community I imagine understood little or nothing but English.... Two of them...sang...[an] English...hymn "Awake my Soul"...learned [at] Flinders, and...sang.it...well." Lady Denison continues, "they are treated apparently with [much] indulgence - not bound down,... [but] follow their own devices to a greater extent than the other children, because of course it is only by gentle degrees one can expect to bring them into regular and civilised habits."

The day being a public holiday, all the boys, black and white, had been down to the river to swim, the little girls would have followed them as they can all swim like fishes"and when they heard the boys were going,...said they [wished] to go...and get some oysters."

How very simple and easy it all seemed on a warm summer's afternoon at the Orphanage. One has no similar record of the long cold days of the winter routine, kept indoors with epidemics prevalent and consequent ill health and wastage. In fact earlier in the century, gastro enteritis had been epidemic at the Queens Orphanage and caused an alarming mortality among the infants and poorer children of the white settlers until Dr. Edward Swarbrick Hall was appointed to their care. This wonderful devout man gave his devoted and humanitarian services to "right affairs" at the school, with remarkable success. A century later Dr. J. Cumpston, Commonwealth Director of Health, studying his efforts, described him as Australia's first "Sanitarian."

James Bonwick, with his knowledge of the Institute, on learning that the native children were to go to the Queens Orphanage, commented "they were sent there to die." Nevertheless, we can be grateful that these poor dejected homeless natives had at least on the above occasions been extended humanity and kindness from Sir William and his Lady.

The visitors book in later years only records one more Vice-regal visit to Oyster Cove. While it was noted however in the same source with the comment "no entry was made in the visitors book on that occasion by the Governor."

THE OYSTER COVE RESERVE AND ITS INMATES

The Reserve itself

The Reserve was described as being of 1000 acres, actually it was rather more. The bay of Oyster Cove is about 20 miles from Hobart Town by water and a little more by macadamised road, the latter then in its last stage from the Snug river being unformed, hilly and tortuous.

Only about 10 acres of the Reserve was cleared, the remainder being lightly timbered and with a dense low heathy scrub. It was bounded by the steep hills to the south, west and north, flat with foothills between the Bay and steeper ones. A delightful fresh water creek (later named after Mathinna who lost her life in it) bounded the Reserve on the north. It flowed through a deep gully running from the steep ranges to the West that were the watershed not only for it but, on the other slope, also of creeks that drained into the Huon River. The Reserve

was sheltered from wind, but in winter the morning fog and mists did not lift until late and the area was damp and humid.

Actually my father added this area to his estate at Oyster Cove about 1900 and, as we spent our holidays (winter as well as summer) the whole vicinity became most familiar to me.

For healthy people with definite occupations, it was an ideal choice. It will be seen that for the natives, ill starved, depressed, old and idle, with no young life around them, housed in the old badly preserved wooden buildings of the convict Probation Station, it was a most unfortunate selection.

In 1850 the natives had suffered an irreparable loss in the death of their Catechist, Mr. Clarke (Father Clarke to them). He had been with them at Flinders Island as Catechist and storekeeper, spoke their dialects very well and was their confidant and friend. Thus, they lost the one person to whom they could turn for affection and guidance and who stood between them and the stern impersonal administration of the Colonial Secretary's Department.

Although Walter George Arthur and Mary Ann his wife (a half caste) were one assumes both bilingual, they lacked the essential "know how" of the white race and could not in any considerable degree bridge the loss that Mr. Clarke's death had occasioned. His successor was Mr. John Dandridge. Also to enable a closer supervision of the Reserve and of the natives, official visitors to the Reserve were appointed and were expected to note in an official visitors book, the date of their visit and their observations and remarks as to the administration and welfare of the natives.

Visitors to the Reserve - Official and unofficial 1849 - 1869.

As already described, in the weeks between December 6th 1850 and March 1851 five of the natives on the Reserve died of various diseases. The news caused grave concern and each death, as it occurred, was reported by Dr. Joseph Milligan to the Chief Secretary for the information of the Governor. In these successive notifications, Dr. Milligan touches on the vital questions of the suitability of Oyster Cove in the way of climate for the health of the natives. The Governor in reply rejected the suggestion of their being attached to the parties surveying roads in the island. As the weeks passed no new nor drastic measures were taken toward improving their situation and a policy of laissez faire or drift continued.

To improve the administration and present some greater degree of supervision, the official visitors book was provided for the Reserve and certain responsible individuals were appointed to make periodical visits to the Establishment and enter in the book their impressions of the wants of the station, the health of the natives, possibly to supplement any report of Mr. Dandridge and, as well, to acquaint the Chief Secretary with affairs at the Reserve. This book bears the title "Diary of the official visits to the Oyster Cove Aboriginal Reserve," and its entries cover the dates between July 1855 to June 1869.

No new regulations standing orders or other instructions were apparently given to Mr. Dandridge as Superintendent.

The book opened on July 27th 1855 and contains the entries of visits by three visiting magistrates and two chaplains at irregular intervals.

The visiting magistrates were:

1. Sir John Atkinson formerly Superintendent of the convict probation station, (now the Oyster Cove aboriginal reserve) who called occasionally, made observations that were of little or no value, and did little else.
2. Mr. Henry Daldy of Franklin, a pharmaceutical chemist who prided himself on his medical knowledge and had a local reputation as such although without medical qualifications.
3. Mr. G. A. Walpole, Police Magistrate to the Huon, who resided at Franklin and seems to have gradually replaced Sir John Atkinson. His visits were regular, his observations accurate and common sense, and his occasional remarks on the aboriginals, helpful and valuable. He must have been of very great support to Mr. & Mrs. Dandridge.

The two chaplains appointed were:

1. The Rev. Edward Freeman, M.A. of Kingston (St. Clements Parish).
2. The Rev. J. Norman, M.A. Surrogate at St. Marks, Sorell.

Both were good earnest men of high character, but both failed utterly in their task. Neither had any knowledge of native dialects and as the natives were not fluent in English they became confused and bored with their teaching and instruction. Finally, on seeing the horse of the parson coming down the road above the station, the natives disappeared into the bush until the clergyman concerned left for his home. This failure of communication was a tragedy to the station.

The two chaplains, naturally discouraged, ceased to visit the station and the natives later found diversion with the bad white men (of the splitter and sawyer type) living in the locality and obtained strong spirits from them. The women no doubt fared even worse than the men from such associations. So the natives became idle and without interest in their gardens, their lives centering around the dingy interiors of the huts and their mongrel dogs.

Apparently an official appointment had been made of a medical officer after an application from Mr. Dandridge seeking some permanent arrangement for medical attendance at the Reserve (CSO 1/71/1814). In this application, he stressed that Mr. G. Stokell on a previous visit had received as a fee the sum of £5 and that he (Dr. Stokell) on that occasion did not record his attendance in the visitors book, the purpose of his visit, nor any necessary treatment. In a second memo Mr. Dandridge reports the severe illness of the aboriginal woman "Harriet" from old age and rheumatism. He considers she should be examined by a medical man as "she may not last through the winter."

Mr. Dandridge goes on to write that "the only medical man in the district is Dr. Smith of Kingston, who would require £5 for his fee, added to which the natives have such an insuperable objection to him that I fear his attendance would be productive of little good." He makes also the suggestion that "a Colonial Surgeon should visit the Reserve," once a month in the winter, and as required in the summer."

We do not know what reply, if any, came from the Chief Secretary. Be that as it may, Dr. William Smith, M.R.C.S., of Kingston became in effect the medical advisor to the station. He was sent for by Mr. Dandridge as occasion demanded and he gradually assumed the sole medical care of the aborigines. Actually it is almost entirely from his notes in the book that it has been possible to compile this clinical narrative of their last years at the station. His recordings are formal, clear, precise, giving symptoms, diagnosis, medical treatment and the diets he recommended.

He was apparently a typical example of the medical practitioner of the Victorian era in the use of such diets as beef tea, mutton broth and linseed tea, also using as stimulants, beer, port wine and brandy to strengthen their effect. On occasions he used with each of these a fresh egg beaten up. He also had complete trust in calomel, senna and salts, with very liberal use of the former.

Better than this description, are reproductions of examples of his entries from the visitors book, which illustrate his method Plate 1. Precise and pedantic in approach, he could be a stoic, as was shown in the manner he met his end, after a fall from his horse when on professional work (appendix II).

There were certain official visitors who came to the Reserve also in 1849. Sir William Denison and his Lady were received with a warm welcome when, as stated above, one the native women demonstrated tree climbing on a big gum tree up to 100 feet to take a parrot's nest. With the primitive gear she used, Lady Denison was "glad to avert her eyes, feeling she would fall."

January 1849 Sir William Denison records his pleasure, on a visit with the Captain of H.M.S. "Curacoa", at the success of the venture of returning the natives from Flinders Island to Oyster Cove, there being of course no mention of the tragic decline in number of the race, only 2 years after their return.

24 March 1858 On this date Dr. R. F. Nixon, Anglican Bishop of Tasmania, came to the Reserve. A noted watercolour artist he did not sketch on this occasion, preferring to bring his camera. Many years after Mr. J. W. Beattie a professional photographer and historian of the Colony, acquired the "stereoscope negatives" of Dr. Nixon "producing a notable series of groups of both sexes with glimpses of their huts and inseparable dogs. A very valuable record, second only to Mr. Woolley's formal series of photographs prepared for the Victorian International Exhibition. Two of the series are reproduced in this paper.

31 May 1859 James Bonwick, the noted historian of the Race and their fortunes in the years before their extinction, came to the Reserve in the late autumn of 1859. He had visited the natives at Flinders Island and was extremely well informed in regard to them having written authoritative works on their recent history and habits.

From his description (Bonwick, 1870) we gain a glimpse of the personalities among the few survivors of the race. He recognised old "Sophia" then apparently about 60 years of age. She was of the Bruni Island tribe and had born two children. Others were:

"Wapperty" of the St. Patricks Head tribe. Her native name denoted "Thunder and Lightening." A negative type.

"Flora" His only comment on this lady is on the exceptional width of her mouth.

"Patty" or "Coonea" (Ring tailed Opossum) 50-59 years of age. At her death in 1869 at the Hobart General Hospital, her age was estimated at 70 years. She was of the Kangaroo Point tribe and married to Albert.

"Caroline" (Queen Caroline) of the Big River (Ouse) tribe. Her native name denoted a Wombat.

"Bessy Clark" Under 40, her native name 'Kangaroo Head'. Captured as an infant at Macquarie Harbour by G. A. Robinson. Married to Augustus the Magnificent. Bonwick rates her character and intelligence at a very high level.

He does not describe any of the males, William Lanney, Augustus, Walter George Arthur or Jackie Allen. We are aware from Mr. Walpole's recordings that all four went on occasional whaling voyages and they were probably out of the Reserve on these formal occasions. Bonwick was unhappy after this visit and very fearful as to the future of these last representatives of their race.

1859 J. E. Calder another local historian of high repute as Surveyor General, writer and bushman, devotes a chapter in his work (Calder, 1875) to his visit. He did not of course sign the official visitors book. In his book he stressed the need of careful supervision to avert the evils that were fast threatening their eventual extinction.

Bonwick similarly drew attention to the lack of religious instruction "if only to prepare them for eternity" and, at the time of his visit, the necessity to prevent their acquisition of strong spirits.

Of all the visitors only one type (unofficial) had any permanent effect on the future of the race, namely, the "bad whites" living in the locality, who traded strong spirits with the natives. At least four of the dwindling band owed their end directly to alcohol provided by such people.

Perhaps if Mr. Dandridge had been made a Justice of the Peace he could have dealt with that problem with one policeman stationed at the Reserve.

The recurrent "Crises" of acute illness at the Reserve and associated factors

In considering the final series of deaths at the Reserve, it is of importance to refer again to a sudden series of five deaths there between December 5th, 1850 and March 21st, 1851 already described.

There were, of course, a number of other deaths following the return to Van Diemens Land in 1847 but they excited no comment in the press nor officially. The five natives just mentioned were all at the Reserve and ordinarily Dr. Milligan, the Superintendent, would have been their medical attendant. In Dr. Milligan's absence on a geological excursion, they were attended by Dr. Rae of Kingston.

The eldest, Catherine, had been in Dr. Milligan's words "Living in a very infirm state and bedridden, long declining, and her death to be expected." He concludes his brief memo and must soon have regretted his optimistic report. "I have expected the death of this woman for some time and it is satisfactory to report the rest of the Establishment is in a state of perfect health." The events of the next few weeks will show he did not have a correct appreciation of the state of health of his "charges".

Actually Martha, daughter of Catherine, had been released from the orphan school 2nd February 1851, to help nurse her mother. She became ill and died on February 3rd. In reporting her death, Dr. Milligan noted "her health had been seriously deranged for many months, and her strength and constitution much impaired from constitutional causes." About 3 or 4 weeks ago her life became seriously endangered by an attack of "low fever" after which she weakened so very feeble as to afford but little prospect of recovery." This continued fever and marked debility suggest possibly Pulmonary T.B. Two weeks later Dr. Milligan had again to report a fatality when Wilhelmena alias "Wild Mary" died after an illness of 3 days from inflammation of the bowels. 15.2.51.

Here one must consider gastro enteritis or food poisoning as a cause of death.

Next month "Edmund" died at the reserve when Dr. Milligan reported the cause as disease of the heart, "after an illness by no means alarming, as far as symptoms indicate, of one days duration." He adds "for the last 12 months his health has been in an uncertain and declining state;" again T.B. must be considered as a contributing factor.

27 March, 1851 Neptune died after an illness of little more than 3 months which commenced with a violent pleurisy which "left a disability so great as to render unavailing any effort to invigorate his system, "and he died on Friday last the 21st." So we may say in four of the five cases, death was preceded by chronic ill-health and a decline and complicated in one instance by acute pleurisy and subsequent decline. The possibility of acute or chronic pulmonary tuberculosis cannot be excluded in four of these five victims.

In the official statistics for December 31st 1854 Dr. Milligan reports the number of natives at Oyster Cove as 16 in all; 3 men, 11 women and 2 boys. So it is clear that of the 45 souls transferred from Flinders Island to Oyster Cove in December 1847, 28 had died from various causes.

Apart from the names of the five just given, official evidence of death and its causes is not available.

Inquiry at the Registrar's office did not help, as there was no official nominal roll of the names of the natives transferred from Flinders Island and without this information the numerous entries in the long series of registrations of death in the island do not disclose the actual names and causes of the deaths. The recent discovery of the official visitors book thus provides almost the only source of the details and causes of the deaths at the Reserve. It opens only on 27th July, 1855 and closes on the 24th June, 1865. It opens with a record of the visit of Sir John Atkinson S.M. on 27 July, 1855 and we may assume at that date 16 natives were in residence. They get scant mention in any of the remarks of official visitors until sickness necessitated the attendance of a medical officer. The first visit of Dr. William Smith M.R.C.S. took place on 23rd September, 1858 and it would seem that, since the mortality of early 1851, there had been no call for the services of a medical man, at least there is no entry of any visit from July 1855 until 23 September, 1858. There is evidence that in the "fifties and sixties" of last century epidemics of influenza recurred in the Colony and also it was believed that such illnesses were introduced to the Reserve by the visits of local tradesmen or less respectable associations with the "bad whites" in the vicinity, so the infection might well have invaded the station at Oyster Cove.

23rd September 1858, we find for the first time the handwriting of Dr. William Smith in the book recording his visit on that date, although the official file contains no mention of his appointment as medical visitor to the Reserve. Dr. Smith records "that following a note from the Superintendent, he visited the Reserve and found "Sarah, Sophia, Caroline, Wapperty and Mary Ann" suffering from disease and disability, apparently the effect of the "local cold wind."

He diagnosed their condition as influenza and put them on what was to become his familiar routine, namely, beef tea, beer, wine, tea, arrowroot and eggs, the latter to be taken fresh and broken into the above liquors. He does not mention any mixture or medication to be given. Sophia had swollen glands and Wapperty had fallen and grazed her knees, Mary Ann was just showing symptoms of influenza. Dr. Smith made a visit every second day with one exception till they were over the acute stage of the attack, and in a week ceased his visits,

leaving them to Mr. Dandridge.

Sarah who had had pains in the chest and marked disability and inability even to take her food, had died on 3rd October 1858. The influenza in this case may well have been terminal to pre-existing pulmonary changes.

18th - 20th August 1859, Dr. Smith was called to Mary Ann, who had pains in her abdomen. Mary Ann was a massive middle-aged half caste, 18 stone in weight, and appears to have been a complete hypochondriac who could be relied upon to waylay Dr. Smith whenever he visited the natives, however hard pressed he may have been with the care of the natives who were really in need of his services, she survived them all (except Trucanini) and moved to Hobart Town with the Dandridges when the station was discontinued.

24th November, 1859, during Mr. Walpole's routine inspection, he was informed of Bessy Clark as having sciatica and Mary Ann as labouring under an attack of jaundice.

19th June 1860 Mr. Walpole notes "The aborigines are all in a healthy state, a portion of them having just returned from an excursion in the bush. Those out on a whaling expedition some time since have not returned." On July 8th he noted Jackie Allen and Billy were back from whaling.

12th July 1860 Four days later influenza had entered the Establishment and Dr. Smith reports Mary Ann and Jackie Allen as ill with influenza and that Caroline had died a few days previously. She had been suffering for several months from general debility "aggravated by a hacking cough (? Pul.T.B.) that appears to have resulted from gradual exhaustion of the vital powers." The Superintendent and his family were all down with the epidemic as well as the domestics.

14th July 1860 On his visit two days later Dr. Smith reported Mary Ann and Wapperty as sufferers and added "but in all probability the epidemic will run its course through the remainder," which was what actually occurred.

27th August 1860 Sophia, Tippoo, Patty and Emma were sick and in a "depressed" state and their physical powers unusually low. He recommended stimulants such as beer in addition to beef tea, mutton broth and linseed tea, as often as they could be induced to take it.

30th August 1860 Dr. Smith at the Reserve to find Augustus had died previous afternoon. Sophia not so well and Tippoo with a fresh cold and bronchitis. The others, Patty and Emma much about the same.

31st August Sophia and Mary Ann the principal sufferers. Tippoo up this morning in the sunshine, in no pain but much debilitated. Mary Ann in pain and complaining of many disabilities.

3rd September Dr. Smith at the Reserve to find that Tippoo had had a relapse yesterday and died about sundown. Sophia, Mary Ann, Emma and Patty are improving but complain of coughs etc.

There were no more visits by Dr. Smith for the next four months but Mr. Walpole visited regularly.

13th January 1861 Mr. Walpole reported Walter back from a whaling voyage and looking much worse than before he left the station. Eleven days later, when at the Reserve, he records the natives as in good health except for Betsy who has a fractured arm.

1862 was chiefly notable for the fact that the Reserve was free from a severe epidemic attack, Emma and Mary Ann being the principal cause for medical visits. The former probably had advanced pulmonary disease and was approaching the end of her life. Mary Ann seems to always have had some cause for complaint. The general health of the natives for this year was far from good and it was just good fortune that no mortality was experienced during the winter.

19th April 1862 Dr. Smith was required at the Reserve where Mr. Trappes was acting for Mr. Dandridge in his absence. He arrived at midnight. Emma had been ill earlier in the week but "improved and apparently recovered" only to become ill again during this day. She was found to have a cough, difficulty in breathing and pain in the side of her chest. She was also in very low spirits and sinking. Brandy was prescribed by Dr. Smith in frequent doses.

When seen the next day she appeared considerably better, having passed a "tolerable night" and was more cheerful. This improvement Dr. Smith implies was due, in part at least, to Mary Ann being excluded from the room. He adds "the dogs also are to be excluded from her apartment as the effluvia from so many animals is anything but desirable in a sick chamber."

He prescribed mutton broth for her. By 21st April Emma was much better and brandy was substituted for porter as her stimulant. Dr. Smith also asked for a nurse to be supplied as the native women were not to be relied upon. On May 25th Mr. Walpole found Emma "in perfect health" but the buildings of the Reserve were "so dilapidated as to be uncomfortable", surely a remarkable understatement.

22nd June 1862 By this date Mr. Walpole made his routine visit to find all the natives at home and in good spirits. Again on 23rd July he found the natives in the same state. On 18th August he once more found all the natives at home including Emma. "The builder is now progressing with repairs and expects to finish in a week."

25th August Dr. Smith called as Mary Ann was ill with obstructive constipation and other symptoms. He prescribed two most drastic prescriptions, Croton oil and a colocynth pill to be repeated in 4 hours if required.

August 1863 Dr. Smith sent for as Emma, who had received a severe beating (no mention of the name of the aggressor) also had a severe cold and cough for which a mustard plaster was advised and cod liver oil three times daily. Wapperty also was sick.

3rd August Emma was improving though debilitated. She was to have a pint of beer daily. Wapperty was convalescent.

On 25th August Mary Ann had pains in abdomen and obstructive constipation, so Dr. Smith was called to see her.

On 3rd October Mr. Walpole visited the Reserve and records "The aborigines have taken the first advantage of fine weather to go kangaroo hunting, 3 only at home, none complaining of sickness."

9th November 1863 Dr. Smith was required for "Jackie Allen" and prescribed a bronchitis mixture, two days later he records his patient as greatly improved.

That is the last record in 1863 of Dr. Smith visiting the Reserve. Summer was now over.

14th July 1864 Evidently another epidemic of influenza was prevailing, and on this day Dr. Smith examined Wapperty and Jackie Allen, the former with pain in her right side and difficult breathing. Three days later at the station he saw also Wapperty and Mary Ann. Wapperty, after being regarded seriously for several days, greatly improved within a week. Jackie Allen is not mentioned.

The last official figures for the natives as on December 31st 1863 were 1 male, 5 females total 6. The passing of Emma had not been noted officially.

10th February 1864 This year opens badly at the station for, on February 10th, Dr. Smith found Jackie Allen very ill on examination, with a violent attack of asthma with delirium and of long standing disease. Jackie Allen was visited five times by the Superintendent during the night and then by Dr. Smith, "but he expired this morning." One may imagine the sadness and consternation at the station. This comparatively young man, home from the sea, to be taken. A small procession followed behind his remains along the track through the scrub to the "dip" in the side of the hill between Oyster Cove and Kettering, where the little burial ground was situated. Now only one male, Billy Lanney, remained and he too was sick in his hut on the reserve below them. Walter George Arthur was soon to meet his death in drowning and his body was not seen again. When, in 1869, Billy Lanney died, it was at Hobart Town, not in the reserve and only the old women were left to lament. Dr. Smith, writing of his death states "Jackie was perfectly collected and sensible just prior to his death" adding that the disease was evidently of long standing "as I have on innumerable occasions been requested to prescribe for that complaint (? was the "recurrent asthma" in reality chronic Pulmonary Tuberculosis).

2nd July 1864 Billy was ill at the station and Dr. Smith diagnosed his condition as influenza for which he was given an expectorant mixture and Croton oil linament. Later on this date, Dr. Smith was sent for during the night to see Mary Ann and Billy, who were suffering from influenza. Again the expectorant mixture and Croton oil treatment were brought into use. Dr. Smith adds "I saw all the aborigines, the rest appear to be fully well." Two days later visiting the station, Dr. Smith describes Billy as gradually improving and walking about the grounds, he has a copious eruption on the chest (from the Croton linament) his cough is much better. Mary Ann is going for a short walk and greatly improved.

4th July 1864 Mr. Walpole on his visit reports "all the aborigines are now in a healthy state and are away from home at this time." He notes also the improvement of the station as the building materials gradually are utilised.

14th November 1864 One aboriginal male and one woman are on a bush excursion and all were reported in health by Mr. Walpole on his inspection.

31st December 1864 The official statement for this date is 1 male and 5 females at the Reserve, the cost for the year being £522.

22nd July 1865 Influenza again was invading the Reserve and Dr. Smith on this date examined Sally, who had heart disease, also Patty with chest infection and Mary Ann complaining of pain in her back. By the end of July all were better but Mary Ann still complained and still had to be seen for some five weeks after "with pains everywhere" and constipation (10th September, 1865).

Mr. Daldy on a visit on 25th September found them all in good health. He interviewed Mary Ann in regard to a man in the locality, Adam Booker, who wished to marry her and joins with the Superintendent in recommending that the marriage be allowed to take place.



Truganina, "Lallah Rookh" or Trucanini.
Died 8th May, 1876.



William Lanné or "King Billy"
Died 13th March, 1869.

Both from a series of Photographs made from life by Charles Woolley a Hobart Town photographer in 1866 for the Royal Society of Tasmania.

July 21 1860
 visited the Station this morning -
 temperature is much higher and has not so
 much rain, appearing pretty much like
 May. The P. M. at the station
 could come at a tickling cough - Jack
 Allen and Wm. Langer appear to be con-
 -sistent. The Superintendent is in a
 better but confined to his room -
 Wm. S. Will - Dargen.

Oyster Cove Station

August 27th 1860
 visited the establishment at 10 -
 P.M. at the request of the station
 agent - and found Augustus in a state
 of great prostration with aces-
 -sation of mucus on the bronchi
 and great difficulty of breathing after
 three or four days attack of the prevailing
 epidemic. Saw him in company with
 the Superintendent at 9 am at 6 am
 and 8.5 11 and ordered pullover seeds
 and Egg to be given every four hours and
 carbonate of ammonia with Ferrous Tea.





Two photos of Tasmanian Aboriginals taken in front of their huts by Bishop Nixon in March 1858 and processed from the original plates of the Bishop by Mr. J. W. Beattie.



A sketch of Tasmanian Aboriginals done by Annie Benbow at Oyster Cove (from memory) in coloured chalks. circ. 1900.

The year 1865 terminated without more medical visits. An official return of the aborigines at the station 31st December 1865 shows 4 women only. William Lanney was away whaling. The cost of the Establishment for the year was £464.

2nd April 1866 Dr. Smith is sent for, to see Patty "ill 3 to 4 days with cough, stitch in the side and difficulty in breathing." She appears to have been given an expectorant mixture with Tarter Emetic and mustard plaster applied and Croton oil to be rubbed in on the left side of the chest. No eruption found, the bowels quite regular and her appetite at present very good.

Dr. Smith prescribed a medium size blister below the breast and to continue the other treatment and strong soups with plenty of onions. "The rest are fairly well."

5th June 1866 Patty was seen again on the 5th and 6th, 11th and 14th. By this time she had very much improved but Mary Ann had boils and Sally complained of a cough.

It must be noted here that frequent visits were now being made by Mr. Daldy and Mr. Walpole was no longer coming to the station. All through the summer Mr. Daldy was available and Mr. Walpole now Police Magistrate at Franklin apparently had handed over his duties to him. The winter and autumn of the year seem to have passed without need for medical visits although Mr. Daldy may have afforded some unqualified advice and treatment.

The year closed without serious trouble.

31st December 1866 Official return gives 1 male and 5 females costing £497.6.0.

1867 This year opens on 12th February when Dr. Smith arrived at the station (late last night Feb. 11) to find Bessy had died. She had been suffering for some days from dysentary (not alarmingly) till a change for the worse came and she unexpectedly died that afternoon. Mary Ann, of course, had to be seen and was prescribed half a glass of brandy twice daily.

24th June 1866 Mr. Daldy visited the station, he noted "The Superintendent in Hobart Town having taken two of the women to hospital (Patty and Lallah Rookh). Wapperty is suffering severely from Diarrhoea and requires hospital treatment. I recommend her being sent up to hospital by the 'Cobra' [a small paddle steamer trading between D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Hobart]."

29th July 1866 Mr. Daldy visited and inspected the station. The Superintendent reported the death of Patty in hospital. Lallah Rookh recovered and Wapperty was better.

8th August Dr. Smith was sent for and found Wapperty suffering from Catarrh and debility, the respiration difficult and the pulse feeble, tongue rough and dry. "She is to have rum and egg every 3 hours with salts occasionally. She cannot be induced to take the beef tea or mutton broth but will eat a mutton chop occasionally." Returning in the evening he found her pulse somewhat stronger and tongue moister. "Continue with diet and mustard plaster and have a blister on the L. side, also Calomel at bed time." Lallah Rookh just commencing symptoms of catarrh. Croton oil rub, and a blister were ordered with a mixture to be taken 4 hourly. Wapperty to have port wine, rather than spirits and new milk and eggs. Mary Ann who has pains in her chest was given warm beer and ginger with Aloetic pills at "certain stated periods."

August 12th Mr. Daldy also visited station, Wapperty died during his visit. Lallah Rookh complained very much of her throat.

19th August Dr. Smith called and found Lallah Rookh very low spirited, "to continue beer and eggs and have a glass of spirits occasionally." This was his last visit in 1867. Subsequently Mr. Daldy called regularly each month with brief written reports on each occasion. This year closed without any further deaths at the Reserve.

On 31st December 1867 the official muster was 1 male and 2 females. 3 females died during the year; Bessy, Patty and Wapperty.

1868 Monthly visits by Mr. Daldy until:

22nd July when Dr. Smith was called to see Lallah Rookh suffering from an infection of the chest and cold from imprudent exposure and suffering also from an attack of Salivation. Visited regularly till the end of the month when she was somewhat better. This is the last recorded visit by Dr. Smith but Mr. Daldy carries on valiantly until the end.

13th March 1869 Mr. Daldy makes his last visit when Mr. Dandridge reported the death of William Lanney (the last male) at Hobart Town.

Early in 1869 the Administration was faced with the fact that the Reserve now contained only 1 native woman (Lallah Rookh) or Trucanini and the half caste Mary Ann Booker and the decision was made to close it on 31st December 1869.

The last entry in the official visiting book from Mr. Daldy on 3rd August 1869 recorded "everything going on as usual." He also noted that William Lanney had died at Hobart Town on 13th March 1869. His death took place at the "Dog and Patridge Hotel" where he stayed on the first night home from a whaling voyage. The cause of his death was not known. Possibly alcohol played a major part, as his ship the "Runnymede" had only paid him off the day before.

Actually, although the Colonial Secretary had made the decision to close the Reserve on 31st December 1869, the position was unchanged so that "Lallah" might be able to use the bush for exercise and to collect shells. Their life went on as usual at the Reserve until, in July 1873, Mr. & Mrs. Dandridge moved up to Hobart Town, taking both Lallah and Mary Ann with them. Mr. Dandridge had been retired and Mrs. Dandridge was allowed £50 a year for the care and lodging of Lallah and £30 a year for Mary Ann.

Mr. Dandridge did not have a long retirement, dying in 1874 and Mrs. Dandridge took over the care of the two native women.

In September 1875, the Press reported "Lallah Rookh" as critically ill and under the care of Drs. Butler and MacFarlane. The Colonial Secretary authorised Mrs. Dandridge to employ a nurse and Lallah gradually regained her ordinary state of chronic ill health. During her residence in town she became a popular figure, children and their parents visiting her and stopping to chat with her when she took her daily walks in the sun.

She was not to see another winter. Early in May of 1876 she became ill with a stroke and was attended by the above named doctors but in a day or two her life came to an end. Mary Ann had preceded her with a similar illness.

With the death of "Lallah" on 8th May 1876, the Colonial Secretary acted at once to avoid the possibility of the mutilation of her remains, as had happened to William Lanney.

Mr. J. E. Calder, on learning of her death, at once made a request that the Government erect a permanent Memorial to commemorate the Race now extinct. No action followed this request.

The committee of the Royal Society of Tasmania made a formal application that the remains be put at their disposal for scientific purposes. On 15th July the Colonial Secretary minuted "that the remains of Trucanini were not to be removed from, or in any way disturbed from the place where they are at present, without an order from "the Governor in Council".

Dr. J. W. Agnew, the secretary of the Society, was a widely respected and most influential member of the community who knew how to hasten slowly. Late in 1878, at the direction of the Council of the Society, he made another approach to the Colonial Secretary with a request for her skeleton. On 4th December 1878 the application went before the Executive Council, which approved that Trucanini's remains go to the Society, with the proviso that they were not to be exposed to public view (CSD 10/31.488).

The skeleton, carefully prepared and articulated, probably was for the best part of half a century on view as the principal object among the articles relating to the Tasmanian aboriginals in the Tasmanian Museum. Some twenty years ago Archdeacon Atkinson drew attention to this fact and, with the Premier, the Hon. Robert Cosgrove and the Bishop of Tasmania, discussed the matter with the Trustees. Her remains were then withdrawn and may now only be examined by *bona fide* scientists but not by the general public.

The sequence of deaths at the Reserve may best be studied by a Nominal Roll and short classification of the nature of the diseases responsible. They are as follows:

In compiling a Nominal Roll of the deaths of the aborigines, only 17 names with the dates and causes of death have been given. The remaining 28 of this total of 45 who transferred to Oyster Cove from Flinders Island in December, 1847 have not been traced. Inquiry at the office of the Registrar General was unsuccessful because the names of the aboriginals could not be given. From the files of the Chief Secretary's Department only the names of 5 who died at the Reserve between December 1850 and March 31st 1851 were found and no others were available. The remainder were taken from the official visitors book until the close of the Reserve in 1869. Details of the demise of William Lanney and Trucanini were drawn from the contemporary press. Apparently no full nominal roll of the names of the aborigines came with them from Flinders Island.

A nominal roll of the recorded deaths after the removal to the Reserve at Oyster Cove.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DIAGNOSIS</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
1. 3.12.1850	"Catherine"	Influenza +	Long history of chronic ill health "Aged and in a long declining state" (Joseph Milligan)
2. 2.2.1851	"Martha"	Pleurisy +	Health seriously deranged for many months (In last 3-4 weeks seriously endangered by an attack of fever. J.M.)
3. 15.2.1851	"Wilhelmena" or "Wild Mary"	Inflamation of the bowels	Acutely ill for 3 days (J.M.)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DIAGNOSIS</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
4. 26.3.1851	"Edmund"	Disease of the heart	24 hours duration, not alarming symptoms, in usual health 1 week before when seen by Dr. J.Milligan.
5. 21.3.1851	"Neptune"	Violent Pleurisy 3 weeks +	Dr. Milligan says onset of violent pleurisy followed by constitutional disturbances.
6. 10.10.1858	"Sarah"	Influenza	Ill for 10 days, influenza and enlarged glands of the neck, very aged (Dr.J.M)
7. 12.7.1860	"Caroline"	Influenza +	Influenza, she had been suffering for several months from general debility, hacking cough and gradual exhaustion (J.M.)
8. 28.8.1860	"Augustus"	Influenza	Great prostration ? terminal Influenza (Dr.S.)
9. 3.9.1860	"Tippoo"	Influenza	Relapse of influenza and general debility (Dr. S.)
10. 1861	"Sophia"	Exhaustion	Generalised accumulation of mucous in the lung ? terminal.
11. May 1861	"Walter G. Arthur"		Drowned from boat in D'Entrecasteaux Channel (? alcohol)
12. June 1861	Male (no name given) (C.S.O. 24/284/6314 31 July 1861)		Died of peritonitis after being bedridden for a long period from hip front disease following the reduction of a luxation.
1862			A mild outbreak of influenza at the Reserve, no fatalities
13. 8.5.1863	"Emma"	Chronic Bronchitis debility	Ill 2-3 days? died from exhaustion Pul. T.B. Another visitation of mild influenza at the station, 4 ill but no fatalities.
14. 10.2.1864	"Jackie Allen"	Violent attack of asthma	Dr. Smith's account of the symptoms suggest a generalised confluent broncho pneumonia (possibly influenza).
1865			Influenza again in July-September several natives affected no deaths.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DIAGNOSIS</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
1866			Another light epidemic of influenza, no mortality.
15. 12.8.1867	"Wapperty"	Dysentary or diarrhoea	Symptoms July 1. Ill at the Reserve without constitutional fever, died at the Reserve.
16. 12.7.1867	"Bessie"	Dysentary	An acute attack of some days duration.
17. 29.7.1867	"Patty"	Diarrhoea	Removed from the Reserve to the Colonial Hospital at Hobart Town and died 2 days later.
17.8.1867			Dr. W. Smith made his last recorded visit to the Reserve to see Lallah Rookh then convalescent from diarrhoea, but troubled with a cough.
18. 13.3.1869	"William Lanney"		Died at the "Dog and Partridge" hotel at Hobart this day, after laying off from a whaling voyage. Cause not stated (? alcohol factor).
19. 8.5.1876	"Lallah Rookh" (Trucanini)		At Hobart Town at the residence of Mrs. Dandridge in Macquarie St. Drs. Henry Butler & MacFarlane in attendance. Age and Debility (after a stroke). With the death of Trucanini the Tasmanian Race was then regarded as extinct. The claims of the other old natives at Cape Barren Is. and Kangaroo Is. to that distinction were never really substantiated.
20. c. 1855	"Mathinna"		Found drowned in the creek at the Reserve. Had been much in the company of splitters & sawyers. (Drowning + ? alcoholic factor).

Comment on the Nominal Roll of deaths at the Reserve

It is clear on the study of the records in the visitors book, that the great majority of the deaths at the Reserve were in the winter months and also were closely associated with the recurring attacks of influenza.

Again it is on record that, of the forty-six individual natives landed at the Reserve in December 1847, by July 1855 there remained only sixteen alive. Against this, we do know the cause of the deaths of the five who died between December 1850 and March 1851 and which head the nominal roll; of the unaccounted 25 who died between 1847 and 1855 no record remains. On inquiry at the office of the Registrar General, the reply was that their deaths would be on the Register, but unless the names of individuals were given, he could not supply the information required. This should have been easy to do but the records of the transfer of the Establishment from Flinders Island to Oyster Cove, give only the number and no names of the natives and no nominal roll exists of those who returned to Van Diemens Land. So very reluctantly one must confine this inquiry to the group at Oyster Cove from July 1855 and include the 5 natives who died as stated between October 1850 and March 1855.

This leaves 18 deaths to be analysed.

Acute cause of death, amounted to 5 in all, namely 1 (Cardiac) and 4 of inflammation of the bowels, diarrhoea and dysentery and one peritonitis.

A number of natives died during the recurrent outbreaks of influenza, but Dr. Smith gives the cause of death from that disease as 5. The balance may be grouped as dying from debility, extreme exhaustion and chronic bronchitis. No mention is made of Pulmonary Tuberculosis or Syphilis, but the former disease no doubt was present in certain of the chronic cases who had respiratory infection. Alcohol accounted for the death of "Mathinna" who was drowned in the little creek at the Reserve, also W. G. Arthur who was drowned returning to the Reserve by sailing boat from Hobart Town. Bonwick states that Jackie Allen was drowned on the same occasion but the visitors book records his death as from asthma. A more likely diagnosis would be Tuberculosis of the lungs.

It is probable that influenza was only the terminal factor in certain of these debilitated and exhausted individuals.

Regarding the diet at the Reserve, it has to be remembered that the natives were provided with a set ration weekly of meat, flour, sugar, tea and salt. Judging by entries of the visiting Magistrates the meat certainly was very often of poor quality, not fresh, with a large proportion of bone.

The vegetable gardens at the Reserve mentioned by "Father Clarke" appear to have been forgotten with his death. There is no mention of potatoes, greens and fruit being provided and there were little or no native roots nor fruits and no mention of taking native honey.

It must be remembered also that, in their natural state, the natives only partially cooked the bodies of the game they had killed. It was customary for them to place the body on the fire or on the coals to singe off all the hair and then eviscerate it, and eat the warm and juicy meat. From this source must have come their essential vitamins, with occasional sea-food of crustacea and shellfish both rich in vitamin content.

It is noteworthy that, at the Reserve, they always came back from their bush excursions with renewed health and vigour.

In view of these facts it may be assumed the condition of "Avitaminosis" must have contributed largely to the mortality at the Reserve.

When Charles Darwin visited Van Diemens Land in the summer of 1836 on H.M.S. "Beagle" the natives were already deported to Flinders Island.

He quotes Count Strzlecki (1845) -

"At the epoch of their deportation to Flinders Island in 1835 they mustered only 54 individuals while each (native) family in N.S.W. not contaminated by the whites swarmed with children, those on Flinders Island had, during eight years, an accession of only 14."

The author (Strzlecki) goes on to make this plea on their behalf:

"Leave us to our habits and customs, do not embitter us by constraining us to obey yours, or reproach us with apathy to that civilisation that is not destined for us; and if you can still be generous to the conquered, relieve the hunger that drives our despair to slaughter your flocks and the men that guard them. Our fields and forests that provided us with abundance of vegetables and animal food, now yield no more, and we are famished."

Such a plea had really a world wide application, with western civilisations colonising any areas that could be found, and not already annexed by a rival power. It was of no real or practical help to the Tasmanians, indeed the Count probably had already made his own appeal in person to the then Governor, Sir John Franklin, with whom he was on very friendly footing.

If this plea had been widely disseminated throughout the English community and those of the neighbouring colonies, some action might have been taken, but no appreciable effects seem to have followed its publication.

Alan Moorehead in his "Fatal Impact" (1966) has narrated the sad story of the impact of the "Noble Savage" and "Western civilisation" in the Pacific. If the physically superior and more highly cultivated Polynesian were unable to bridge the gap between the cultures, what hope would the Tasmanians have of doing so? It appears to have been only the question of how long could the small remnant survive:

"AFTERMATH"-OYSTER COVE 1851 - 1870 - 1900 - 1907

My own personal memories of Oyster Cove open in the late "nineties" of last century, at our old weatherboard cottage, where we were accustomed to spend our school holidays. Daily, in the early mornings, my companion (usually Alan Butler) and I were accustomed to take the track to the station some half a mile away and bring back the milk required for the families use. This was purchased from a Mr. Palmer who then lived with his family in what had been the residence of the Superintendent of the Convict Probation Station.

About 1900 my father acquired the Station Reserve and it is still in the possession of the family. When at Oyster Cove, it is a pleasant walk along the old track made and used by the natives. The buildings then were broken down and in ruins, nowadays all that may be seen is a flat area around which the buildings of the Reserve, including the huts and Superintendent's quarters formerly stood.

Now I must mention a personal matter that gives me much concern.

In the spring of 1907 or 1908, as a medical student, I was in the Anatomy class of Professor R. T. A. Berry, a renowned Anatomist from Edinburgh with strong leanings towards the comparative Anatomy of the Australian natives. To assist his research and to obtain additional skeletal material, he made an appeal to his country students to bring him any skulls or other aboriginal bones that may have been found on the estates of their father's or friends. The response was good. Much material came in to the Anatomy museum of the University. Toward the end of the year he sent for me as a Tasmanian to inquire about such material in this state.

I was able to tell him of the crania in the Tasmanian Museum available for examination and, as well, the material at "Kelvedon" held by Tilney Cotton, Esq., which early last century had been collected at his ancestors homestead by the local Colonial surgeon, Dr. G.F.Storey. As well, I told him of the possibility of exhuming bodies at Oyster Cove.

The professor had obtained for my Medical school a Dioptrigraph by which the actual measurements of crania and certain of the other bones might be traced in several "normae", and he proposed to send this to Hobart during the long vacation.

In early January of 1909, Dr. Robertson, Senior Demonstrator of Anatomy, arrived and commenced operations with the Dioptrigraph on the crania at the Tasmanian Museum. That done, I had obtained the consent of Mr. Tilney Cotton for him to go to "Kelvedon" where he was made an honoured guest.

Meanwhile, my lifelong friend Wendell Inglis Clark, with whom I shared a room at Ormond College during our medical course, came to Oyster Cove with me to make our preparations there.

In due course Dr. Robertson arrived and we settled in around a good fire. That evening Mr. Charles Benbow, a local farmer who had been born in the Cove within a few hundred yards of the station, called in to offer his help. Indeed, as it turned out, his help was vital. He was strong and energetic and a hard worker. Next morning Charles arrived and off we went up the old native track towards the summit of the hills that separated Oyster Cove from Little Oyster Cove (now termed Kettering). About half way up, in a shallow dip, he located the cemetery, which had no enclosure or distinguishing marks, or headstones. It had become covered in bracken wire ferns and had reverted to its natural state. We started to dig in several directions. It was a bland summer day and the soil, a black sand, was firm but easy to the spades. About midday we found the first body at a depth of about 4 feet.

After that it was not so difficult to locate others. Each had been buried in a hardwood coffin of split gum still, after 60 years, firm, although moist and friable. The bodies were all infiltrated with tendrils of what may have been fern roots, about 3 times the diameter of coarse horsehair, which had replaced the viscera and soft tissue, but had not damaged the crania very much. and very little affected the long bones.

We exhumed I should say about 12 bodies and the parts usable for tracing we brought to Hobart and thence to Melbourne for the full examination of the remains. The remainder we reverently reinterred in the place they came from. In due course Professor Berry's team made exhaustive studies of the remains, the results of which were published in the "Proceedings" of the Royal Society of Victoria and elsewhere.

The crania less several in scientific care were returned to my father and are now with all my large collection of skeletal remains of the Tasmanians which as well as an excellent series of Thylacine skulls (now almost extinct), I presented to the State Museum on the occasion of its centenary in January 1963. They were described by Professor A. A. Abbie and myself in a brochure published on that occasion.

At the time of this exploitation of the aboriginal remains, we were quite unconcerned as to the morality of the undertaking. Whilst I kept my father informed, I did not ask his views on the matter and I assumed that he was agreeable. Certainly I did not sense that he disapproved in any way.

Now in these last few months working at the data covering the last few months of the survivors of the Race, I have been able to picture them, name by name, their huts here and there, and their individual habits and peculiarities, with the males off for an occasional whaling voyage, and the women, apart from occasional excursions into the bush with their dogs, at the last doomed to sit around in the Reserve waiting for the end. With this additional knowledge came a certain sympathy, affection and sadness that no one had been able to give them hope and health. So my complacency in regard to the recovery of their remains had given place to feelings of deep regret and dissatisfaction with myself.

But as an uncle of Joseph Conrad wrote to his nephew, when he was feeling guilty and depressed, "one must stand up to ones conscience as to all the other difficulties of life" and, at 18 years of age, the enlargement of science seemed to me to justify such action.

To return to the narrative.

The decision to close the Reserve was made in September 1869 and became effective on 1st January 1870. Mr. and Mrs. Dandridge may have remained until June 1872 at Oyster Cove as the Government handed Trucanini over to their care and Mr. Dandridge was given a pension of £123.8.10 a year and £60 a year for the care of Trucanini as well as £30 for the care of Mary Ann, whose marriage to Adam Booker seems to have broken down. In a short time (24th July 1871) Mary Ann was admitted to the hospital at Hobart Town with a stroke and partial paralysis and not expected to recover. Mr. Dandridge died on March 4th 1874 apparently at Hobart.

Trucanini was to last another 2 years, living with Mrs. Dandridge in Macquarie Street. She was the object of much attention as she went for her daily walk and delighted in talking to all who stopped to speak to her.

Her death came on 8th May 1876. She was attended by Drs. Henry Butler and MacFarlane. The obituary notice of the Mercury is reproduced as Appendix I. She was buried in the cemetery above the old Women's Penitentiary at the Cascades. Her remains did not escape the fate she so dreaded; her skeleton at some period was articulated and for many years was on exhibition at the Tasmanian Museum. Of recent years public sentiment caused it to be withdrawn from exhibition but it is carefully preserved at the Museum and available for scientific study by authorised persons. There was no public scandal, as was the case when the head and other parts of William Lanney were removed from the body by unknown persons after his death in 1869.

On 8th May 1976 Trucanini, in my belief the last of her race, will have been dead for a century.

Surely we Tasmanians, their successors, owe a worthy and permanent Memorial or Memorials to commemorate their remembrance and sad and tragic fate. Such a Memorial is long overdue and the appeal should command the support and help of those persons who have been fortunate enough to have been born and to spend their working lives on this lovely island. "And the place thereof shall know them no more". Psalm 103. v. 16.

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- 619/1 S.A. of Tasmania *Diary of visits to the Oyster Cove Aboriginal Reserve 27th July 1855 - 24th June 1869*. The source of this paper also files of C.S. Dept.
- Col. Secretary's Dept. The material relating to the aboriginals is not concentrated and difficult to find.
- Oral information From my father E. L. Crowther M.D. 1843-1931 who, as a school boy had two contacts with them, and remembered the reminiscences of his father and others concerning the last years of the Tasmanian natives. Mrs. Annie Benbow whose father was an N.C.O. of a detail of the Imperial troops stationed in V.D.L. and also a number of the older inhabitants of Oyster Cove who retained vivid memories of the "Blacks".
- Mrs. Benbow could sing in part at least one of their songs, and it was her custom to sweep the white hearthstones of her kitchen fireplace, and with a piece of charcoal illustrate diagrammatically the stories of the native friends of her girlhood.
- Appendix I *Hobart Town Mercury* May 9th 1876.
- Appendix II *Hobart Town Mercury* January 2nd 1878.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have to thank the State Librarian (Mr. W. L. Brown) and Mrs. M. McRae, Principal Archivist, State Archives, for permission to quote so copiously from the Official Visitors Book of the Oyster Cove Reserve. 619/1.

APPENDIX I

"Mercury" 9th May 1876. P2 Col. 5.

THE LAST OF HER RACE.

Trucanini, or Lallah Rookh, as she was sometimes called, the last of the aborigines of Tasmania, passed away to her eternal rest yesterday afternoon at the residence in Macquarie Street, of her protectoress Mrs. Dandridge. The death of this last scion of a once numerous race is an event in the history of Tasmania of no common interest; and it may well serve to "point a moral and adorn a tale" on the question of the gradual but certain extinction of the aboriginal races of these southern lands. Of Trucanini we shall no doubt hear many interesting narratives now that she had departed this world, but at present we must content ourselves with a few brief facts concerning her life and death, leaving it to others who have leisure and opportunity to favour the public with more extended notices respecting her. That she was a Queen is an admitted fact, and that she had five husbands, all kings, is generally known. The last of these partners of her joys and sorrows was the celebrated King Billy, who died in March 1869, and was the sole remaining male representative of Tasmanian aboriginals. It is a singular fact that Trucanini assisted "Black Robinson" in his efforts to induce the few natives then alive to place themselves under the care of the Government. She accompanied "Black Robinson" on a visit to the natives, distributing presents of various kinds, and when they paid a second visit they were warmly received, and the natives eventually consented to be taken care of by the State.

Trucanini has seen them all die, she could tell many very exciting stories of her life, and used to amuse those friends who visited by relating them. At one time, with other natives, she was in Victoria, then known as Port Phillip. A murder was committed, and though she always said she was innocent, she, with another woman and some males, were sentenced to be hanged. Fortunately for her, she had saved a lady and 2 children from the fury of the blacks on one occasion, and this coming the ears of the authorities, her life was spared. Twenty years ago when Mr. Dandridge, who succeeded Dr. Milligan, took charge of the Oyster Cove aboriginal station there were sixteen survivors of the race, including Trucanini, who belonged to the Bruni Island tribe. Fifteen of them died during the life of Mr. Dandridge. Nearly 3 years ago, he with his wife and family removed to Hobart Town, bringing Trucanini with them, and the citizens soon became familiar with the form of her Majesty. She appeared at public gatherings on several occasions, and frequently went out for walks, always in charge of some member of the family with whom she lived. Her short, stout figure, red turban, and dusky features were known far and wide, and always attracted great attention. She was partial to conversation, and was always willing to give such information as was within her knowledge. The death of Mr. Dandridge, two years ago, was the occasion of great sorrow to her, and he never ceased to mourn his loss. Since then she has been under the care of Mrs. Dandridge, the Government having for many years granted £60 per annum for her maintenance. She suffered a good deal from bad health of late. Though sometimes very weak, she always rallied, and promised to live many years. Within the last ten days, however, she had a presentiment that she was going to die, but it did not seem to give her great concern. She required constant attention, and was a source of great anxiety to those in charge of her. Up to Wednesday last she was able to speak, and was, in fact, in possession of all her mental powers. On the evening of that day she called Mrs. Dandridge, and told her that the devil was on her hand, and asked her to catch him, then she fell off into a fit, from which she never wholly recovered, her power of speech was lost to her after that. She still kept up well though, and was attended by

Drs. Butler and MacFarlane, who did all they could on her behalf, but in vain. On Sunday morning they could give no hope that she would live much longer. Up to the very last she was sensible, and just before she died she recognised Mrs. Dandridge. She passed away as peacefully as a child; and though she was about 73 years old, she did not look half that age after her death. Notwithstanding that she was a great trouble to Mrs. Dandridge and her children, they were very much attached to Trucanini, who fully reciprocated the feeling. She had lived with the family for twenty years and had become like one of themselves, so that it is but natural that they should feel her death, more acutely than might be expected. The immediate cause of her death was paralysis. It is hoped that we shall not have a repetition of the scandal in connection with the body of King Billy, though threats have been made that such would be the case. Trucanini had a vivid remembrance of that disgraceful affair, and she obtained a promise from Dr. Butler that no mutilation of her body should take place. The body was yesterday afternoon removed to the General Hospital, where it is to be deposited, and when the funeral takes place we know not; but no doubt the Government will see that proper respect is paid to the remains of the departed Queen.

"Mercury" May 11th, P2 col. 3

Funeral arrangements for Trucanini still being considered. Application by Royal Society for the body to be preserved for science refused. Main aim to avoid the disgrace of March 1869 when the body of King Billy was desecrated. Body to be buried at Cascades in front of the Chapel.

APPENDIX II

"Mercury" 2nd January 1878 P3 Col. 3

Death of Dr. Smith

It is my painful duty to record the death of Dr. Smith, who was killed by a fall from his horse whilst engaged in his professional duties. The deceased gentleman has been for many years practising in the Huon and Kingborough districts, and his loss will be deeply regretted by all who knew him. He leaves a wife and family of nine children to deplore his death.

An inquest was held at Franklin on Monday Dec. 31st, on the body, before Mr. Walpole and a respectable jury, one of whom Mr. George Innes, was foreman, when the following evidence was taken.

John Lambert, C.D.C. deposed that on Dec. 26 he visited Southport in company with the deceased, who went down professionally at the request of witness. Deceased and witness left Southport about three o'clock the same afternoon to return to Port Esperance. The deceased was riding a horse which he had borrowed from Mr. Connolly. Witness was also riding, and kept behind deceased on the road so that deceased might take his own time. When they got within about three miles of Port Esperance witness noticed the deceased, who was then trotting, lose his seat, in consequence of the horse having swerved a little to the left. He partly recovered himself, and nearly got back into the saddle but again lost his balance, and made a second attempt to get back into the saddle, but immediately afterwards fell off the horse on to his right side, apparently doubled up, witness hurried up, got off his horse and took hold of the deceased under the arm and raised him slightly and asked him was he hurt. Deceased was then grasping for breath; he said "Oh! Oh!" placing his hand on

his right side. "I think my ribs are broken." Witness then assisted him on his feet, when, on being raised from the ground, deceased cried out and said the pain was dreadful. Witness then asked deceased to get on his witness's horse and he walked to a log ten or twelve yards away where he was assisted on the horse, deceased kept putting his hand to his side just above the hip and crying out. After deceased got on the horse he rode without assistance, and witness ran and caught the other horse and went slowly to Port Esperance with the doctor, where the deceased was lifted from the horse and walked into the inn from the stable about 30 or 40 yds. Witness went in shortly after. Deceased was then laying on the sofa in the parlour; he appeared to be resting quietly; he afterwards, at about dark went to bed without assistance. Witness took him some tea which he drank. He was afterwards, about 10 o'clock, visited by the landlady, Mrs. Connolly, who reported him quiet. On the following morning, at about half past 3 witness went into the deceased's room. He was then sitting up in the bed, and leaning on his elbow he complained of severe pain. Witness asked him if anything could be done for him. He said he would like a mustard plaster on the spot. Witness procured the assistance of a female and the plaster was applied. It was then suggested he should be bandaged. Deceased said that would be right. A calico bandage was then put around the deceased and he said he felt easier. Witness continued with the deceased until half past six that morning, when he left for home, the woman (Mrs. Lamb) remaining attending upon him. Witness noticed in going to Southport that deceased was riding with stirrups, and drew his attention to it. Saw deceased upon his arrival at Franklin on the Friday evening in a boat. He was then altogether unconscious, convulsed and breathing heavily, and with difficulty. Witness remained with him until half past 12 that night. There was no change for the better. Saw him during the next day at intervals until he died, but he never recovered consciousness.

H. J. Daldy deposed that he was a duly qualified medical practitioner at Three Hut Point. Had that day at request of the coroner, made a post mortem examination of the body of the late Dr. Smith, there were no external marks of injury perceptible; found five of the ribs on the right side fractured at a distance of about three inches from the spine; the liver had been punctured by the fractured end of a rib, which had not caused any serious injury; the interior portion of the right lung had been penetrated or punctured by one of the fractured ends of another rib in such a way as to cause considerable hemorrhage, and the cavity of the chest was nearly full of blood. Witness was of the opinion that the deceased's death arose from the suffocation caused by hemorrhage from the lung. The bleeding would be gradual, such an injury might have been caused by a fall from the back of a horse in particular position or direction. The cause of death was so obvious that he did not feel it necessary to examine the other organs. The symptoms detailed by the first witness were such as would arise from such an injury. It was improbable that surgical assistance at the time would have been effectual. After the Coroner had addressed the jury, a verdict of accidental death was returned.

APPENDIX III

ADDENDUM. Additional note on the health of the aboriginals

Somehow in reading these pages before printing, I found that the most important factor in preserving the health of the natives has been omitted. Constantly we may read in the visitor's book, that certain of the natives, sometimes the majority had gone on a bush excursion.

Actually it would seem that no restriction was made on their going off with their dogs "hunting". They found their way principally to the western hills and thence into the Huon valley.

After one lengthy period of absence, it would seem they had gone as far as Port Davey. With their dogs they could run down kangaroo or alternatively get opossums from the trees. So their food would be fresh and full of vitamins, and in this manner they reserved their health and morale. They were not encouraged to visit large settlements or to go to Hobart Town. On such bush occasions they came back in better spirits and health from the change in environment and the rich vitamin dietary.

It was only with increasing age and lessening numbers that they remained constantly at the Station, and in that lazy and sedentary existance became victims of influenza and such other diseases, to which they had little or no resistance.

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